



Myths and Facts of Sexual Assault

MYTH	FACT
Rape is sex.	Rape is experienced by the victims as an act of violence. It is a life-threatening experience. While sexual attraction may be influential, power, control and anger are the primary motives. Most rapists have access to a sexual partner. Gratification comes from gaining power and control and discharging anger.
A person should always fight back.	<p>Since sexual assault is often life-threatening and each assault is unique, the best thing a victim can do is follow his/her instincts. If a victim escapes alive, he or she has done the right thing.</p> <p>This fact is underscored by the number of sexual assault victims who are injured as a result of the assault each year. Analyzing National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) data from 1992 to 2000, Rennison (2002) found that 39% of attempted rapes and 17% of sexual assaults against female victims, on average, resulted in injury.ⁱ</p>
Men can't be sexually assaulted.	According to the National Institute of Justice (2000), 1 in 33 men in the U.S. have experienced an attempted or completed rape at some time in their lives. In 2004, there were 101 male-on-male sexual assaults reported in the Armed Forces.



MYTH	FACT
Sexual assaults are rare and affect few people.	<p>In 2002, the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), conducted by the Department of Justice, reported 240,730 rape/sexual assault victimizations among U.S. residents age 12 and over. In 2004, there were 1,700 <i>reported</i> sexual assaults in the Armed Forces.</p> <p>Note that sexual assault is one of the most underreported crimes in society and within the military. In a national sample of college women, less than 5% of the rapes/attempted rapes were reported to law enforcement.ⁱⁱ</p>
You can tell a sexual offender by the way they look.	<p>Sex offenders are not physically identifiable. They may appear friendly, normal, and non-threatening. Many are young, married, have children and are viewed as “top performers.”</p>
Most victims are assaulted by a stranger.	<p>Most sexual assaults are committed by a person the victim knows, or has just met.</p> <p>In the 2002 NCVS, friends or acquaintances perpetrated a little over half (52%) of the rape/sexual assault against males. In the case of female victims, 57% of the rapes or sexual assaults were perpetrated by friends or acquaintances, while 10% were perpetrated by intimate strangers, 2% by other relatives, and only 28% by strangers.ⁱⁱⁱ</p>



MYTH	FACT
Sexual assaults are impulsive, uncontrollable acts of sexual gratification. Most are spontaneous acts of passion where the assailant cannot control him/herself.	Sexual assault is a premeditated act of violence, not a spontaneous act of passion.
Only certain kinds of people get assaulted.	Offenders act without considering their victim's physical appearance, dress, age, race, gender, or social status. Assailants seek out victims who they perceive to be vulnerable.
Most sex offenders only commit one assault.	<p>Most offenders assault multiple times- until caught. Often they have committed other crimes as well, including robbery and child molestation.</p> <p>In one sample of 122 undetected—or those not involved in the criminal justice system—rapists, the group as a whole admitted to 386 acts of rape, 20 other acts of sexual assault, and 264 acts of battery against intimate partners.^{iv}</p>
The way a woman dresses affects the likelihood she will be sexually assaulted.	The way a woman dresses and/or acts does not influence the attacker's choice of victim. Offenders are looking for available and vulnerable targets.

ⁱ Rennison, C.M. (2002). *Rape and Sexual Assault: Reporting to the Police and Medical Attention, 1992-2000*. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics Selected Findings: Washington, DC.

ⁱⁱ Fisher, B.S., F.T. Cullen, and M.G. Turner. (2000). *The Sexual Victimization of College Women*. U.S. Department of Justice. National Institute of Justice: Washington, DC.

ⁱⁱⁱ Rennison, C.M. and M. Rand. (2003). *Criminal victimization, 2002*. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics: Washington, DC.



^{iv} Lisak, D and Miller, P. (1999). *Unmasking the Undetected Rapist*. National Symposium on Non-Stranger Sexual Assault.